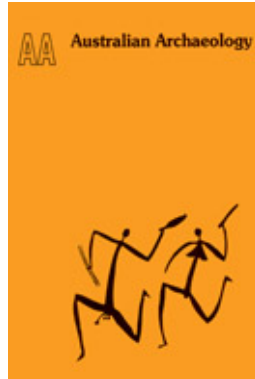


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rock art, and burial sites, and how their own tribal forebears found meaning in life. We have plans on the Survey to introduce teaching about these things for mixed classes in Armidale high schools in 1975. This will bring them to something less than kindergarten stage in their understanding of Aboriginal laws and culture but it is a necessary beginning.

Another group who already feel the lack of their own knowledge are men aged 30-60 who have shown signs of wanting to absorb the rules of the traditional system in a somewhat modernised form. We have plans on the Survey to feedback the results of our research to this group by involving them in projects to protect the sites and also, maybe, by a revival of the initiations.

A whole new education and 'feedback' system will have to be gradually built up, using all the old knowledge as a basis, together with a lot of new ideas coming from our thrashing out together the present-day realities that our people have to cope with. How to get this to happen? Maybe I'll be able to tell you in a few years from now, after I've graduated further in my own initiation!

Ray Kelly
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FROM THE 'CULTURAL BIND' TO A SOLUTION - THE SURVEY OF ABORIGINAL SACRED SITES IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Now that Ray has outlined the circumstances which led the Aboriginal people into the 'cultural bind' as he calls it, my intention is to show the part played by the Survey to encourage a 'revival' or 'renaissance' of the Aboriginal culture in New South Wales. From our experience on the Survey I will go on to make some suggestions which can be applied to research elsewhere in Australia. My view of the Survey is first that it is a natural development in sociological research in Australia and as such is closely linked with the events of the present decade when we have witnessed an extraordinary rise in the political and 'cultural' awareness of minority groups the world over, especially among the Aboriginal people, and an increasing desire to participate fully in matters concerning their destiny. Because of this the Survey has considerable social consequences and responsibilities.

Before we could even begin to be effective in our work it was necessary for us to make the firm commitment that this research was to be first and foremost for the benefit of the Aboriginal people. The belief upon which we operate on the Survey is straightforward enough - basically that really effective Aboriginal 'advancement' cannot take place unless the Aboriginal people know where they had come from, and where they are going and what they hope to achieve in life. To this extent it is up to the Survey to give them the opportunity to participate in a revival of their culture.

Work on the Survey then is primarily motivated by the recognition of the fact that Aboriginal advancement means having a pride in one's heritage and also having access to that heritage. This is an important point. Since the events which Ray has outlined took place and the initiations ceased, knowledge about the old ways among the Aboriginal people has decreased to the point where most younger Aboriginal people would have no way to re-absorb their original tribal culture even if they wanted to because so much of it is now either lost forever, or being kept a secret by the elders, or exists in the form of academic papers. The task would be impossible. Hence, our job on the Survey is to act now to preserve what still remains of the culture, to give the elders a means to communicate their knowledge in an atmosphere of trust and understanding, and then to feed back the results of our work in a simple and effective way that can be instantly grasped by the 'grass-roots' Aboriginal people. It is the more general task of all of us to contribute to the renaissance of the Aboriginal culture in whatever direct and meaningful way we see possible.

These are not only my ideas and ambitions but they are shared by a majority of the Aboriginal people. Wherever we work on the Survey we hear Aboriginal people saying the same thing, 'We have a heritage, we are proud of that heritage and we want to see it preserved'. For example, Ted Fields, who writes in our local *Aboriginal Human Relations Newsletter* has this to say:

"We have the choice - whether whites afford us that or not - of deciding whether we want to become lost in the mainstream of society or instead working towards strengthening and improving the function of Aboriginal society as a *distinct strand within the whole*." (my emphasis)

The task is not easy for a number of reasons. To begin with, very few white Australians have any appreciation of their country's Aboriginal heritage and where any understanding exists at all, the chances are that it will be among those popular misconceptions which we should act right away to correct. One of these, that there is no Aboriginal culture remaining in New South Wales, was held by some 'experts' in the field prior to our appointment on the Survey. Perhaps it is still held by some, and doubtless by the majority of Australians but our work has shown that the Aboriginal people of New South Wales have a heritage that is most definitely worth preserving and a Survey which will enable them to achieve this ambition.

Another major misunderstanding which is widely accepted is that Aboriginal society has not evolved since the arrival of the European but that it was, as it were, 'frozen' in a sort of time capsule. This view implies that the whole Aboriginal culture is a 'survival' from the past, in the way that Tylor used the word, with no alternative in today's world but to integrate with white society and lose the Aboriginal identity as quickly as possible. In fact, this is not the case at all and it is encouraging to find that official policies concerning the so called "integration" approach are beginning to reflect this awareness. Furthermore we can show that there are really very positive ways in which the Aboriginal culture has evolved since 1788. The way in which traditional religious beliefs have been fused with Christianity, as with the syncretic cult of Birroogun (Balugan) on the north coast of New South Wales is one example. So also was the decision not to continue with the initiations a positive step in the evolution of Aboriginal society, in an effort to find a place in European society, the consequences of which turned it from an emphasis on the traditional into the present-day cultural bind. All of which brings us back to the Survey, which actively seeks to promote a revival of interest in the culture and hence to build yet another step on the evolutionary 'ladder'.

My remarks so far have outlined the 'long-term' objectives of the Survey without saying much about our more immediate plans. All research takes time and this is particularly so of anthropological research which involves people. But it is important that in trying to achieve our long-term results we make sure that the people with whom we are working do not become frustrated and lose interest in the meantime and then mentally 'switch-off' to the work. This of course applies equally well to archaeological research in Australia at present which is becoming increasingly sociological in its perspectives.

A quote from a recent article in *Mankind* on the attitudes of Melanesian students to research and fieldwork in the social sciences throws some light on this problem:

"The view seen here is that research work has its vices as well as its virtues. Frankly the term research, is at present creating the connotation of dislike everywhere in the country. Research work to Papua New Guineans is a means to solve long term problems. Theirs are short term problems and they expect immediate return. They become frustrated and disinterested when and if their expectations are not achieved soon."

This seems to me to sum up one of the major difficulties facing the Aboriginal people and with which we had to contend at an early stage on the Survey. There is no denying that achieving our tangible long-term aims such as acquiring land to protect the sites, takes a long time, and our more difficult goal of restoring the Aboriginal heritage to its rightful place takes even longer. What steps to take to avoid frustration and disappointment setting in in the meantime, is the question. On the Survey we have overcome the problem of accepting the distant horizon which I have outlined but also adding

more immediate horizons which fall more easily within our reach. These ambitions which we have on the Survey are many and I will consider only the main ones today.

The first concerns our plan to appoint Aboriginal rangers as guides for the sites we are protecting, and, in a manner of speaking, as 'guardians' of the Aboriginal heritage. The men who we will be seeking to police the sacred sites of New South Wales will necessarily be exceptional characters, combining a degree of traditional knowledge with an ability to handle all eventualities in their work. It is certain they will find themselves in difficult 'crises of conscience' from time to time and their main worry will be how best to serve two masters - their own people, and the 'establishment' and this I believe is the dilemma in which many Aboriginal leaders find themselves today.

But having gained the trust of a small but enthusiastic group of Aborigines as we have done on the Survey, how then to reach the majority who although not in a position to grasp the rapid developments which are taking place in every field that concerns them, from welfare to anthropological research, nonetheless care very much about their destiny? There is no clear answer to this problem but on the Survey we believe that educating the children is a means to educate the whole community. Parents of course are the ones really in the cultural bind, and have come to terms with it in various ways, most commonly manifested by drinking and gambling. As yet the children have no such routine! Our rangers will be required to undertake excursions with Aboriginal children first, then maybe European children, to visit sites of general importance rather than true 'sacred' sites, to learn something about their heritage. They can then pass a little of what they have learnt on to their parents. In this way our feedback is assured some degree of success and at least reaches the generation of young people who will benefit most directly from the revival of the Aboriginal culture which the Survey seeks to make possible.

This is not to say that it is impossible to involve the older people and our experience on the Survey has shown that in certain cases, attempts to do so may be quite successful. For example we decided early last year to involve the Bellbrook community in a project to fence in their mission cemetery. Several of the old men of the Thangetti tribe lived on the mission and had requested this action during our first discussions with them about the Survey. As an indication of our goodwill and willingness to produce positive, short-term results wherever possible, the effort quite obviously was essential.

Interestingly enough, there is more to this operation than meets the eye for although fencing the cemetery had an intrinsic value in that it mobilised the abundant labour on hand at the reserve for a worthwhile community project, it also showed us that the old men were, in a certain sense, putting us 'on trial' and further, playing for time themselves. For these were men who had been fully initiated during the 1930's and carried with them an understanding of the sites and culture of the Thangetti which they

were at first understandably dubious about sharing with us, even though Ray had lived among them for most of his early life. Asking us to fence in the cemetery was a kind of decoy to lead us away from the real sacred sites and keep us busy while they thought things over.

This shows that in any projects involving local communities, whether Aboriginal or European, the surest path to success is not necessarily the most direct. Our strategy on the Survey has always been to involve the Aboriginal people in the research during the initial stages. It could be argued that in a project such as the Survey where information on sites and advice on their protection could come only from the Aboriginal people, there was no alternative to this approach, but that archaeological projects are different and should be guided by a different strategy. While I would go along with this to a certain extent, it is becoming increasingly obvious that any project that affects the Aboriginal people must involve them in a meaningful participation in both the research and the results right from the start. This goes for anthropology, psychology, archaeology, linguistics, community development, the lot.

Involving the Aboriginal people in archaeological research should begin as early as looking for an area for fieldwork. Indeed given the knowledge that a number of older men in New South Wales still have of traditional matters and also from their experience as drovers, station hands and the like, the researcher would be foolish not to seek their advice at an early stage. When a decision has been reached, this should be put to a meeting of local Aboriginal people in the same way as we hold these meetings from time to time on the Survey. It is often necessary to throw out a few ideas first for discussion rather than risk the impression that a decision has already been reached.

To end with, an outline of the results of our work on the Survey may be of interest. In our "Site List", compiled in July 1974, we documented a total of 132 sacred, or at least 'significant' sites in New South Wales. Since July, we have a further 37 sites on record and more are reported each week. Of this new total of 169 sites, one or both members of the team have visited around 70 sites, in the past 19 months, mostly within the New England, mid-north coast and far-north coast areas of the State which account for 65% of the total. This area is approximately 14,000 square miles in which we have on record some 120 sites at present. In other words, there is an overall concentration of sites in the region of 1:117 sq mls.

We have divided the sites into seven categories which are scheduled to be revised for the next edition of our site list. These are, in order from most numerous to least numerous:

1. Natural features of mythological significance - 66 or 43% from the July figures;
2. Ceremonial sites - 34 or 22%;
3. Burial grounds, both contemporary and ancient - 19 or 12%;

4. All rock art sites - 15 or 10%;
5. Carved trees - 12 or 8%;
6. Stone arrangements - 4 or 3%;
7. Massacre sites - 3 or 2%.

Much more than numbers, however, the extent to which this data provides a genuine insight to the feelings of the Aboriginal people in New South Wales regarding their sites and culture is of the greatest importance. There is no doubt that the most sacred and significant sites, those which take the Aboriginal people in a direct line back to their traditions which only really were lost when the initiations ceased in the late 1930's, are those in the first three categories, the mythological, ceremonial and burial sites which account for 77% of the total sample.

The preservation of the Aboriginal culture in New South Wales rests upon these sites. In the past they provided local territorial landmarks for the hunting groups and in a very real sense the individual was 'owned' by his or her particular mountain. This sense of belonging is evident in many areas of New South Wales today and as I have indicated, we have numerous examples of such sites on the Survey. The ceremonial grounds, including many of the carved trees and rock art sites, are where the great initiations took place, and these symbolise the Aboriginal values and laws and the greatness of the religion which encouraged such a harmony between Man and Nature. Lastly are the burial grounds, the importance of these being for the living rather than the dead, creating as they still do, the vital link with past generations, the ancestry upon which the Aboriginal heritage rests.

These are contemporary sites and they are being given a contemporary role. They are still landmarks, not only in the traditional sense defining the land of the Aboriginal people, but also metaphorically as the 'focus' for identity in the future. The ceremonial grounds will continue to be symbolic of a religion, the values of which can be readily appreciated in today's conservation-minded world. The burial grounds will remain as links with the past, promoting a sense of identity with a heritage of which to be proud.

This heritage into which we are researching belongs ultimately to all of us as Australians but first and foremost to the Aboriginal people. Our task is to facilitate a renaissance of 'Aboriginality' and to seek every opportunity for it to find expression in Australia today. If I didn't hold these views I couldn't be undertaking the work that I am doing on the Survey. And if we both didn't believe in the role of the Survey that I have outlined, then it would be pointless to have a Survey of Sacred Sites at all. The fact that the Survey has to date produced such encouraging results confirms our belief in the strategy of consultation and involve-

ment through which we communicate the ideas and aims of the research. Put another way, there is more to a successful healing than removing the stone from the patient's body, as any nguloongurra or 'clever' man will tell you. The secret is to get the timing right and trust in God to do the rest. The time is certainly right - it's up to us to do the rest.

Howard Creamer
N.S.W. National Parks &
Wildlife Service

THE STATE, PEOPLE AND ARCHAEOLOGISTS

Though I was asked for this contribution because I am a "state" or "public" archaeologist, I have no mandate to speak for any other such archaeologists in Australia, nor do I intend to discuss the interpretation or administration of the various acts which throughout most of Australia limit and control the activities of professional archaeologists. I suspect that it is not the actual details of legislation, but the principles of its interpretation which is of most interest and relevance to the first symposium of the AAA.

I therefore want to talk about some of the potential problems which could arise or have arisen between state archaeologists, other archaeologists, and Aborigines, using as a basis the experience of New South Wales over the past five years.

These can be summed up as:-

1. The potentially conflicting demands of conservation and research;
2. The apparently conflicting interests of archaeologists and the Aboriginal community, which the state is perforce involved in arbitrating.

As this paper is focussed on the role and situation of state archaeologists (i.e. persons employed by government authorities to administer legislation regarding archaeological sites and material) I shall simply refer throughout it to other professional archaeologists as "non-state archaeologists" in order to avoid the over-subtle distinctions between people working in Universities, Museums, on research grants, etc.